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Security Council

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Letter dated 15 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a letter addressed to you from H.E. Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (see annex).

I should appreciate it very much if the present letter and its annex could be circulated at the earliest possible opportunity to all members of the Security council as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Fesseha A. **Tessema**
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 15 May 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would like to draw your attention to my Prime Minister's message of 11 May 2000, addressed to you, and also to my own message of 12 May 2000 (S/2000/421), delivered to you on the same day the Security Council adopted resolution 1297 (2000), in which it totally ignored how our country, Ethiopia, found itself in a mess and in a nightmare created by the Eritrean aggression.

Despite our plea to you, and to the Security Council as a whole, not to overlook and give short shrift to the pains endured by our people, the Council decided to tell us that poor countries have no right to defend their sovereignty against a criminal act of aggression. Since the Security Council felt that we had no such right, it decided to punish us for having dared to insist on rights affirmed by the Charter of the United Nations, of which we are a founding member.

Is it not a mockery of justice, and even of elementary decency, for the Security Council to even remotely contemplate punitive measures against Ethiopia who, the Security Council knows, is the victim of aggression, regarding which the Council chose to keep mum for two years? In June 1998, Ethiopia had pleaded to the Security Council to help it avoid war with Eritrea by sending a clear message to the aggressor country to reverse its aggression. That was what the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), by a decision adopted at its thirty-fourth session on 10 June 1998 in Ouagadougou (S/1998/494), had asked Eritrea to do. That OAU summit decision was based on the United States-Rwandese peace plan in which Eritrea was requested to return to the status quo ante of 6 May 1998. The Security Council refused to help us at the time, and has since continued to ignore our plea.

The Security Council has not been fair to Ethiopia, the victim of aggression. We cannot thus be surprised by the thrust and content of Security Council resolution 1297 (2000). The resolution is all the more puzzling, and all the more painful for Ethiopia, because it came soon after Eritrea had again torpedoed another opportunity for peace, this time, the Algiers proximity talks.

It was our hope that, at least belatedly, the Council would pass a resolution reminding Eritrea of its obligation under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and demanding that it take immediate action to reverse its aggression. We had hoped also that subsequent steps by the Security Council would focus on measures that would be likely to be taken should Eritrea fail to comply with that demand.

I wish to reiterate to you, and to your colleagues on the Security Council, to whom I trust copies of this message will be circulated, what I had emphasized in my message to you referred to above. "We believe it is never too late to do whatever is necessary for peace. This shall always be Ethiopia's principled position. Thus, we remain always ready to assist the Organization of African Unity to help us achieve peace." (S/2000/421)

The Security Council has demanded in its resolution 1297 (2000), among other things, the earliest reconvening, without preconditions, of peace talks, under OAU auspices. This of course cannot be directed to Ethiopia because Ethiopia is not

responsible for the collapse of the latest talks, nor for the lack of a breakthrough in the peace process, in general. Let me assure you that Ethiopia is, even now, prepared to go immediately to the proximity talks and commence from where we left off in Algiers on 5 May 2000, through no fault of Ethiopia. Our commitment to the peaceful resolution of this crisis has never been affected by the military balance at the theatre of war. Our objectives are not military, but political. These political objectives are nothing more, and nothing less, than the reversal of the Eritrean aggression and the affirmation of principles of international law.

Let me also assure you that the success that we might achieve at the proximity talks would lead, and must lead, if there is the requisite goodwill on the part of both, not only to a ceasefire, but to a durable peace, stability and development in our sub-region.

As the Security Council is contemplating punitive measures, including an arms embargo, on the victim of aggression, Ethiopia, it has to be conscious of the enormous implications of its decision. Should it proceed to do that, it would be sending an effective message to our sub-region that what is appropriate for us is the rule of the jungle, and that principles of international law have absolutely no relevance to our region. This is a recipe for disaster with immense implications for peace and stability is our area.

(*Signed*) Seyoum **Mesfin**
Minister